



## Efficient And Secure: How the 121 Platform Revolutionizes Cash Assistance in Ethiopia

The conflict in the Tigray Region, as well as inter-ethnic clashes in central and western Ethiopia, have rendered the area highly unstable, leading to large-scale displacement and exacerbating food insecurity through damaged services and infrastructure, drought, and intercommunal tensions. In response, the [Dutch Relief Alliance](#) has formed a consortium of organizations to provide vital support through a [joint response](#) which sustainably addresses needs and fosters resilience for displaced communities, ranging from education to protection, [WASH](#) services, and [multi-purpose cash assistance](#). [The Netherlands Red Cross' data and digital initiative, 510's 121 platform](#) has been used by international and local NGOs as part of this joint response. 121 has emerged as a game-changer by measurably speeding up the cash assistance provided, unlocking potential to scale this project up and reach more communities in need.

### Streamlined Implementation for Multiple Partners

The Dutch Relief Alliance's joint response involves multiple partners coming together to deliver fast and efficient solutions. Reinforced by 121, its cash component is led by [Cordaid](#), and implemented in different camps hosting internally displaced persons in the Amhara region by the Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church Development Commission ([EKHCDC](#)), Action for the Needy in Ethiopia ([ANE](#)) and [Dorcac](#). Combined, the three implementing organisations deliver cash to 600 households. The implementation of 121 stands out for its straightforward and versatile nature, offering out-of-the-box solutions for most cash assistance programmes and compatible with local payment service

providers, such as the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia (CBE) in this case, to make it suitable for any context. What makes 121 unique is that it streamlines processes by bringing all partners onto a single platform, with varying degrees of access. While all implementing partners can insert and change data from their operations, Cordaid as project leader can only view but not edit data, allowing the organisation to easily report back to the Dutch Relief Alliance as the donor. This simplified approach significantly accelerates collaboration by breaking down traditional barriers to faster and more efficient communication, reporting and coordination.

**121: Efficient from Registration to Payment**

	Previous approach	121
Screening	same	same
Selection	same	same
Registration	2 weeks - 1 month	<u>1 week</u>
Verification	no means of verification	<u>done alongside registration</u>
Payment Request	1 - 3 days	<u>no payment request</u>
Cash Transfer	1 - 3 weeks	<u>done in 1 click</u>
Cash Receipt	same	same

A critical dimension of 121’s impact is evident when comparing cash assistance under the umbrella of the joint response before and after its implementation. The platform’s efficiency, analysed by Cordaid over a period of six months and two payment rounds, is highlighted by a substantial reduction in the time required to register participants and

process payments (*see figure*). Whereas previously, these tasks could take up to several weeks, 121 has slashed this time to mere minutes, revolutionising the speed and agility of humanitarian cash assistance efforts. In total, up to 19 days could be won by using 121, ensuring that affected households will receive the money they need as fast as possible.

Joint response implementing partners share how 121 has improved their daily operations across various stages of the cash assistance process:

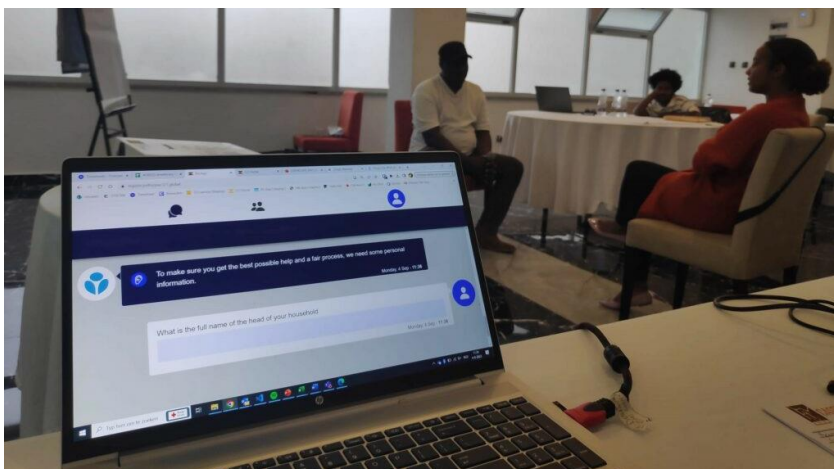
***“Registration and data cleaning is much faster with 121. The deduplication report detected four duplicates in ID numbers due to typing mistakes which allowed for quick follow-up, whereas previously we had to go through the paper or excel registrations one by one to find duplicates.”*** – Berhanu W/yohannes, Finance and Grants Coordinator at EKHDCDC

***“Verification of data is much easier with 121. The CBE verification report instantly provides us with information on errors in bank accounts which is very convenient.”*** – Bezawit Endeshaw, Senior Programme Officer at ANE

***“Previously, it took up to one week to process a payment. A beneficiary list and cover letter needed to be prepared and signed by two people, then submitted to and authorized by the bank. With 121, making a payment can be done within minutes!”*** – Berhanu W/yohannes, Finance and Grants Coordinator at EKHDCDC

### **Real-World Impact and Future Opportunities**

A training introduced 121 to the implementing partners in September 2023. The training involved representatives from various departments, ensuring broad support, understanding and continued use across organizations. Feedback from participants emphasizes the platform’s competence: ***“There is huge potential for something like this”***, says Inge Leuverink, cash and voucher assistance focal point at Cordaid. Continuous post-training support to implementing partners has ensured a smooth transition into future phases of the project.



*Exercise teaching participants to register households in the 121 platform as part of a training held by 510 in Addis Abbaba, September 2023. © Erna Goudt / 510*

All implementing partners express a keen interest in continuing to use the 121 platform, envisioning additional functionalities such as audit reports. With renewed funding for 2024-2026, there is an opportunity to scale up the program further and address unique challenges in different regions, extending 121's benefits to more partners and potentially other consortiums led by the Dutch Relief Alliance.

The 121 platform is a shining example of innovation in humanitarian aid, bringing speed, efficiency, and security to the forefront. Having been successfully implemented in various programmes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lebanon and the Netherlands, its tangible impact on those who need it most through swift cash assistance makes it an invaluable tool for humanitarian organizations committed to effective and responsive aid operations. As such, the 121 platform is not just a tool to fill immediate gaps today, but a catalyst for a faster, safer, and more efficient future in the field of cash assistance. As the joint response consortium continues to champion the 121 platform in Ethiopia, the future holds exciting possibilities for widespread collaboration, bringing together partners on a single, efficient platform.

**We'd love to hear from you!**

Are you interested in incorporating the 121 Platform into your cash assistance programmes? Please reach out to:

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